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ABSTRACT

A literature review of barriers to women who re-enter higher education studies is presented. Several factors are thought to influence the experience of re-entry women: the type of institution she attends, the type of program that she finds there, and her personal and social situation. Re-entry women are discussed in terms of inner city women, low income women, and middle and upper-middle class woman. Ekstrom's (1972) classification of barriers to re-entry (dispositional, situational, and institutional barriers) and Astin's (1976) variables (program-related, time of classes, location, distance, etc. and personal variables) are considered. The following concerns are examined: regulations of colleges, application and admissions, faculty/staff attitudes, nontraditional credit, scheduling and other academic reforms, special services, counseling, unfamiliarity with the system, financial need, time management and role strain, child care, rusty skills and inadequate preparation, support of family and friends, commuting, health and fatigue, attitudes and personality, and guilt and anxiety. A bibliography is included. (SW)

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# REVIEW ARTICLE:

# BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC RE-ENTRY WOMEN

# AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

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October 1979

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Review Article: Barriers to Academic Re-entry Women and How to Overcome Them

## I. Introduction

In the 1960s a greater percentage of women were marrying for the first time than had ever done so before and they were marrying younger, for the median age had dropped to 20.3 years (Astin, 1976). Van Dusen and Sheldon (1976) note that in our society marriage and child bearing have been considered sufficient reasons for women to leave school. As a result, many women left college before graduating to care for their homes and children or to finance their husband's schooling (Cunningham, 1973). This pattern leads to what Bernard terms a pattern of "disrupted education" (Astin, 1976).

The traditional college and university system has been geared to the male pattern of education (Astin, 1976; Kelman and Staley, 1974-75), which produces both formal and informal barriers to women's participation. This pattern assumes married women to be disinterested in continuing education (Astin, 1976). This review focuses on these and other barriers facing re-entry women: those women, single or married, who return to higher education after an extended absence of five years or more It also considers the resources and coping strategies enabling them to achieve their educational goals.

Not all institutions have accepted the assumption that women do not wish to resume their education. Changing views were responsible for the establishment of three Continuing Education for Women (CEW)

Programs in the early 1960s: The Radcliffe Institute, the Minnesota Planning and Counseling Center for Women at the University of Minnesota and Sarah Lawrence College (Wells and Magruder, 1972). The rationale behind them "aimed to open existing systems" to give re-entry women an opportunity for education (Astin, 1976).

New features such as part-time work, flexible scheduling at hours convenient for housewives, liberal provision for transfer credits, educational and employment counseling, financial assistance for part-time study, nursery services, and job placement or referral services were innovated by pioneering institutions (Wells and Magruder, 1972).

Kelman and Staley (1974-75) note that the circumstances of a woman's life had begun to change. They quote La Follette, who wrote that most married women live one-third of their lives after the youngest child is married. Technological advances led to smaller families, longer life span and less house work. More women are working outside the home than ever before; many seek an education as preparation for entry into the labor force (Letchworth, 1970), a better job, an opportunity to update an earlier job or to change fields (Moore, 1970). This increased career interest is partially due to the rising cost of living and the need to supplement family income in order to maintain a standard of living or to provide college funds for children (Wells and Magruder, 1972). Many women are the sole wage earners for their families as a result of divorce, separation or widowhood (Van Dusen and Sheldon, 1976).

Social reform and the feminist ideology have had their impact on increased re-entry of adult women (Anderson, 1974). Resumption of one's education is viewed as an alternative to the traditional female role. Letchworth (1970) indicates that for some, re-entry provides escape

from family and community responsibilities -- or marital difficulties and divorce. Others felt a compulsion to complete their college education; it was seen as "essential to life." Another group sought relief from boredom when women were needed less by older children (Letchworth, 1970), and where other domestic responsibilities had eased (Wells and Magruder, 1972); or where women have no identity other than that of their husband and see his life as more exciting. Volunteer and club activities cannot always alleviate the boredom (Letchworth, 1970). Marjus (1970) interprets women's renewed interest in education as an effort "to establish a new career or life work that is appropriate to their current life situation... something (more) challenging and rewarding, both financially and intellectually."

These feelings lead to the well-documented increase in adult women returning to campuses across the nation. These women seek to complete interrupted undergraduate work or undertake graduate work (Moore, 1970). Watkins (1974) differentiates these more recent students from the earlier re-entry women who often "dabbled in enrichment courses."

The recent students are seen as serious, determined, dedicated and hungry to learn (Astin, 1976; College on the week-end, 1976; Schuman, 1978). They are appreciative of their second chance, enthusiastic -- and ready to learn (Byrne, 1970). All this commitment creates a highly motivated and achieving student (Brandenburg, 1974). Indeed, Kalman and Staley (1974-75) quote Lewis, who found that in general the re-entry student is academically more successful than the younger student -- which he attributes to her higher motivation. Markus (1976) reported that half of her sample received better grades than they had as younger students. A University of Wisconsin study indicated that "on the average

the longer they are out, the higher their grades when they return" (Campbell, 1977). And, in support of this position, over 60% of Astin's (1976) sample maintained a "B" average or better.

## II. Authors

It is almost entirely women who write about the adult woman returning to school. Frequently these authors are themselves re-entry or former re-entry students. In some cases the former student is now a CEW counselor or administrator. Together with other administrators, guidance and counseling personnel, and teachers working with mature students, these authors contribute heavily to this literature. Some articles came from research for a re-entry woman's master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. Other articles and books are products of sociologists or psychologists who made a study of re-entry women on a single campus or surveyed many such groups throughout the country.

Thus, awareness of and interest in the adult female student as a unique populace to be described and studied appears to be stimulated by personal experiences encountered as an older student or through close involvement with these students in a special program.

## III. Institutions, Programs, and the Re-Entry Woman

Several factors influence the experience of a particular re-entry woman: the type of institution she attends, the type of program that she finds there, and her personal and social situation.

### A. Institutions and Programs

Institutions vary in size, urban or suburban location, selectivity

and tuition expenses. They may be commuter schools or largely residential in nature and may serve a co-educational student body or an all or mostly female one. There are community colleges, state and private schools all varying in prestige. Some are day schools, others night schools, and even a pioneering week-end school (College on the Week-end, 1976). Institutions also vary in their financial standing.

The number of re-entry women who attend a particular school is largely dependent on a given combination of these variables. In turn, the institution's response to her presence and its provision of services for her needs stem from the size of the re-entry population and the importance she has for them as a financial resource.

In many ways the type of program depends on these circumstances. Some programs are extensive, well integrated into the institution and well financed; others are not. The literature describes variations of both types.

Some programs concentrate on counseling, while others seek to provide comprehensive services, generate networks, and act as advocates on behalf of the incoming or matriculating students. These services will be discussed in later sections of this review.

B. The Re-Entry Woman[1]

A survey of various studies finds that the adult student generally is in her thirties and forties, married and a housewife with children.

[1]The primary sources for this ideal-type presentation include publications by Angrist (1976), Astin (1976), Boston Conference (1973) Douvan (1977), Haller and Rosemayr (1971), Komarovsky (1962), Levine (1976), Maracek and Kravetz (1977), Markus (1976), Papanek (1972), Tittle and Denker (1977), Turner (1971) and Van Dusen and Sheldon (1976).

She is mostly white, middle-class with some college prior to marriage. Almost all have had a history of paid work and/or volunteer experience. Most respondents reported that they were financially well off. Generalizations, however, can be deceptive and fail to note the diversity within this group. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the importance of sub-groups resulting from the women's individual statuses, life-cycle stages and personal characteristics.

In her study of women in the labor market, Oppenheimer (1970) suggests that there are different female labor markets. She isolates two sets of factors that determine group membership. The first set includes education, skill and social status. The second concerns age and marital status which determine a woman's place in the family life cycle. She concludes that "...women who vary in these characteristics are not equally drawn to the same types of jobs." Clearly, these factors also influence re-entry women in their choice of schools.

Tittle and Denker (1977) recognize as well that a general classification like re-entry women needs sub-categories. They isolate three sets of variables as important and view each in terms of the stage of the life cycle. The first set is the sex role and includes marital status (never married, married, separated, divorced, widowed) and family status (number and ages of children). Next, they consider occupational or career status and include past and present financial needs, past and present work status, as well as the years one has worked or has work-related experience, and the type of occupation. Finally, they include individual characteristics likely to influence program development, including purpose of study, levels of aspiration in education and work and values relating to sex role and occupational role, and attitudes toward work

and childrearing.

1. Inner City Women

The inner city woman has few assets and few possessions. While her income is low, so are her expenses and standard of living. She works to supplement family income or as the sole breadwinner. Thus, as a return to school curtails this income, it can cause serious problems, and so she frequently continues to work while in school. If she has children, she turns to relatives for child care; husbands seldom help and there is no money for sitters. She has no car for transportation and relies on public systems to get to campus. Her journey to school is time consuming because public transportation is slow and her travel distance may be great. Ghetto values do not emphasize higher education and ghetto schools do not give her the background her suburban sisters receive. Therefore, her motivation and ability may be less than the more advantaged. Her awareness of how to go about re-entry may be even lower, as is her knowledge of how to gain the financial aid set aside for able members of minority groups. Conversely, those few who are determined to have an education must be very highly motivated to overcome these obstacles.

2. Low Income Women

Low income women fall into two categories, those from the working or white collar class and those who are themselves or whose husbands are in the early stages of career mobility. Among the latter one finds the single woman who returns to imporve her career options or the woman who quit school to support her husband in graduate or professional school

and who now has begun to establish himself -- freeing her to resume her studies. The first category of woman shares many characteristics of the inner city woman. The greatest difference lies in aspirations of the second group as low income professionals. While they are unable to achieve the lifestyle they aspire to, they have expectations for doing so someday. The woman's education is an investment in her future and, therefore, she is granted greater tolerance than women in the first group for time spent in studying, rather than with the family or on domestic duties.

The low income woman has some resources available to her for transportation and childcare. Her networks are likely to be looser knit than the ghetto woman's because of her husband's schooling and job-related moves; therefore, she can not so easily turn to family for child care. There is, however, no money for household help and working class women receive little, if any, help from their husbands. Fewer possessions, however, require less time spent in their care. These women have fewer social pressures than middle and upper class women because of their lower income. For example, there is little money for travel, entertaining or an extensive social life. While there is the possibility of financial aid, there might still be a need to work while in school. This category of woman is likely to have past work experience and in the case of the young professional or junior executive wife, she is likely to have some prior college education.

3. Middle and Upper-middle-class Women

Middle and upper-middle-class women have financial resources unavailable to inner-city and low-income women. As a result, they do

not have to be employed while in school nor attend full-time to qualify for financial aid. There are often funds for child care, household help and automobiles, allowing for convenient transportation. These women often have attended college earlier in their lives, and, therefore, have an awareness of what the college experience involves and how to find it. They are familiar with local institutions through re-entry friends and their own or other's children.

On the other hand, there are offsetting factors. Housekeeping standards are often high. Many of these women own large homes filled with possessions and surrounded by gardens, all demanding care. Social pressures encourage heavy involvement with the children. Thus, one is expected to participate in one's children's activities and to be at home in the after-school hours. One is expected to volunteer time to the community and to participate in a husband's career by entertaining or attending those functions important to his work. Social obligations must be met as well. To cut back on any of these activities is to risk lessened family support, for when there is no financial need to work, it is more difficult to justify taking time away from the family in order to go to school. While there may be adequate funds to pay for tuition, not all women feel they have a right to use family money for their own education. Financial aid, however, is based on a husband's income and is not available to those who merely prefer to finance their educations independently. The appended chart (page 9A) suggests the ideal, successful re-entry woman student.

IV. Barriers and Supports

In their review of the re-entry woman, Tittle and Denker (1977)

# IDEAL RE-ENTRY SUCCESS

## Dimensions

| Objective | Subjective |
|---|---|
| I. Enough money<br>—adequate income after expenses<br>—need to work | Feels free to use it |
| II. Enough time<br>—responsibilities to others:<br>husband, children, aging parents | Feels free to use it<br>— standards |
| III. Enough ability<br>—preparation<br>—health and energy | Self-esteem |
| IV. Enough assistance<br>—support systems:<br>child care, household help from<br>husband, children, relatives | Feels free to use it |
| V. Realistic goals | Motivation to achieve them |

categorize the barriers faced by this group within the framework devised by Ekstrom (1972) in an earlier review. This classification has three sections: dispositional, situational and institutional barriers. Institutional barriers involve the ways the institution deals with the re-entry woman, as for example in admissions procedures, financial aid practices, regulations, inadequate student services and faculty/staff attitudes. Situational barriers are the personal circumstances likely to affect the re-entry women's progress, such as lack of time for their multiple role obligations, child care arrangements, low income, inadequate previous education and rusty skills. Dispositional barriers are the re-entry women's concepts of themselves and the world, for example, guilt and anxiety, attitudes about traditional roles for women, motivation and personality.

One could also classify problems according to Astin's system for dividing problems cited by her respondents into program-related and personal variables. The former category included such problems as the time of day classes were offered, class location, distance and transportation costs. The latter problems included lack of time, skills and ability, direction and purpose, family obligations, and guilt about money and neglect of children (Tittle and Denker, 1977).

This review uses Ekstrom's overarching categories and combines Astin's variables with Ekstrom's for a fuller picture.

A. Institutional Barriers and Supports

The existence of institutional discrimination against women prior to Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972 has been well documented. According to an earlier classification by Ekstrom (1972), institutional barriers included sex and age quotas in admissions practices, financial

aid practices, regulations, deficiencies in curriculum planning, insufficient student personnel services, and faculty/staff attitudes. Today, many of these same biases continue to exist for the mature woman, but in more subtle form. In some instances, policies and regulations established for the young student act as a barrier for the woman who has a family.

1. Regulations

Westerveldt (1975) notes that the male and female have different life schedules. The re-entry woman, unlike the male, frequently interrupted her education to raise a family. Thus, institutional regulations that place time limitations on previously earned credits (Astin, 1976; Schuman, 1978; Tittle and Denker, 1977; Westerveldt, 1975) penalize the mature woman. Additional study also faces the woman who follows her husband to a new area; for she frequently must meet the residence requirements of yet another institution (Astin, 1976; Byrne, 1970; Ekstrom, 1972). Therefore, women returning to school may pay a premium for their education in both time and money (Boston Conference, 1973).

Regulations that require transcripts of previous work, entrance examinations and letters of recommendation are barriers to the woman who has been out of school for a period of years, They can be both difficult to produce and poor predictors of ability (Brandenburg, 1974). One institution has successfully waived all re-entry requirements other than a high school diploma and has found its mature women are good risks regardless of earlier records (Cunningham, 1973). The woman with family responsibilities and/or a job can be deterred by insistence upon full-time enrollment, continuous enrollment, or demands that one's studies be completed within a set time-span (Ekstrom, 1972; Markus, 1976; Westerveldt, 1975; Tittle and Denker, 1977). For those who

can take the time, find a school that will allow it (Ekstrom, 1972) and pay the additional tuition that frequently accompanies it (Boston Conference, 1973), part-time study enables a less pressured existence. Tittle and Denker (1977) report that in the years 1970-74, 63% of the 15-34 age group and 80% of the over 35 age group chose to attend in this manner.

2. Application and Admissions

Failure publicly to disseminate information on application procedure, available child care, financial aid and where to find answers to one's questions acts as a powerful deterrent to re-entry (Astin, 1976; Miller and White, 1973). Reactions to age, as exemplified in policies expressing the belief that older women belong at lesser institutions, that they do not belong in graduate school, and that age quotas should be used, are further barriers to admission of re-entry women (Margolis, 1974; Tittle and Denker, 1977).

Encounters with red tape in admissions procedures, unfamiliar jargon used during registration, orientation, and in curriculum planning present particular problems for those women without prior college experience (Brandenburg, 1974). Brandenburg suggests that a student or admissions personnel worker work with the re-entry woman as an "interpreter." Many individuals are unsure of their goals and need help in order to focus them (Miller and White, 1973; Brandenburg, 1974).

3. Faculty/Staff Attitudes

Re-entry women sometimes incur discouraging or hostile attitudes from faculty and staff members. Motives and capabilities are questioned; part-time work is viewed as dilettantism. Counselors fail to understand

re-entry problems because they are accustomed to working with traditional aged students and counselor attitudes are colored by sex stereotyped expectations. Well-intentioned advice may fail to take limited time and money into account. Mature women report that they are given less help with job placement (Markus, 1973 and 1976; Ekstrom, 1972; Watkins, 1974; Tittle and Denker, 1977; Boston Conference, 1973). Understanding individuals, however, such as the administrator who assigned a parking place behind the day care center to a harried mother, can be a resource to the returning student (Smith, 1977).

4. Non-Traditional Credit

Women who have been out of school for a number of years often have had non-traditional learning experiences that may lead to formal credit. Some schools allow one to earn as much as two years of college credit for various in-depth experiences upon successful completion of the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP) tests. Occasionally credit for field experience or advanced standing may be granted as a result of a talk with a faculty member. It is possible to earn a degree through examination and minimal residency in a University without Walls program. Such programs save the student time and money and provide a sense of accomplishment.

Many women fail to seek credits for non-traditional learning because of the difficulty of doing so or because such programs are unacceptable at their school. They may undervalue their past experience or be unaware of how to gain credits due them. One student group attempted to remedy this lack of knowledge by incorporating information into a handbook on how to gain credit through testing (Brandenburg, 1974; Cunningham, 1973; Ekstrom, 1972; Tittle and Denker, 1977; Goode and Laskaris, 1973). Some institutions

offer external degree programs through television or correspondence courses (Ekstrom, 1972).

5. Scheduling and Other Academic Reforms

Astin (1976) notes that one of the three problems most frequently cited as most important was the time of day classes were offered. Required courses, in particular, could present scheduling difficulties (Watkins, 1974). Working women are reported to prefer evening classes while young mothers are said to prefer daytime classes meeting once a week or individually assigned independent study (Astin, 1976). Some inner city women found night classes required dangerous traveling and others had to babysit at night while their husbands worked (Boston Conference, 1973). A survey of preferred class times led one small college to schedule core courses between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. as well as between 7 and 9 p.m. (Cunningham, 1973). Unlike the young mothers who found independent study a scheduling aid, others were unprepared to manage the freedom it presented, finding it confusing and frightening (Lipsky, 1973).

Elite schools are likely to be more inflexible than less prestigious institutions. A first-year law student noted that her program offered no night school, summer school or part-time enrollment. Last minute changes in class schedules made child care arrangements especially difficult as did unexpected late-night meetings (Smith, 1977). Many schools lack flexibility in course sequence (Cunningham, 1973).

Certain academic reforms are viewed by some women as a disadvantage. The trend toward "winter or spring terms," that period of time between semesters meant to provide broadening experiences for the young student, acts as an interruption for the older woman pressing to finish her education. In addition, open time breaks a newly established family routine when the

children are still in school. One college met re-entry demands for a mini-semester program during this time (Cunningham, 1973; Lipsky, 1973). Curriculum changes can benefit the inner city woman. She may have considerable experience in specific context, but lack general knowledge in an area of study. Thus, a reversal of the traditional course sequence, where one begins with general introductory courses and then moves to a specific topic, may better help her gain the ability to analyze the subject matter (Boston Conference, 1973).

6. Special Services

6a. Orientation Programs

Special orientation programs for re-entry women were cited by students as a top priority (Tittle and Denker, 1973). Institutional personnel recommend that they be offered to new students in the spring or summer prior to enrollment or during the first week of the new term in order to familiarize these women with special services and available programs and to introduce them to other re-entry students. At this time they should meet with academic advisors to plan their programs, visit classes, and have access to workshops on writing, library use and study skills dealing with note taking, development of study habits and coping with examinations (Boston Conference, 1973; Cunningham, 1973; Kelman and Staley, 1974-75; Levine, 1976; Tittle and Denker, 1977).

"You Too Can Return to College" is a six-week course of this type offered by the University of California at Davis. Tittle and Denker (1977) report that it provides for group sharing, and interest and aptitude testing as well as teaching study skills, sharing time management tips and providing career information along with resume and interviewing techniques. A twice-weekly five-week, non-credit summer course is offered by another college to teach basic skills and to familiarize incoming women with the institution's faculty

and facilities (Cunningham, 1973). This subject reappears in greater detail in the section on rusty skills and inadequate preparation.

IV. A.6.b. Counseling

For some women, the need for counseling and support services arises prior to admission. This is especially true of the inner city woman who is unsure of what she wants because she has little knowledge of the alternatives available to her. She needs help in locating a CEW program and assistance with her application and admission procedures. She, and others as well, need counseling on career goals and financial costs to attain them. Past experience must be evaluated to determine if it will merit non-traditional credit. These needs can be, but seldom are, met by pre-admission counseling, which ideally can be so extensive as to include a drop-in babysitting service, assessment of family needs and advocacy on behalf of the would-be student's application (Miller and White, 1973).

The respondents in one study termed encouragement and support from counselors, and others, as crucial at the time they made the decision to return. It continued to be so in their early days as students (Astin, 1976).

When the mature female <u>does</u> return to school, certain changes can be predicted -- changes in her self, her lifestyle and her interpersonal relationships. These changes frequently create tension within the families of married women as the student role affects all of their lives. Counseling offers re-entry women various means of coping with these, as well as other problems (Boston Conference, 1973; Roach, 1976).

Personal and group counseling can help these individuals to determine

what they need and want by focusing themselves and by assisting in evaluating their strong points, values and attitudes (Astin, 1976; Brooks, 1976; Gross, 1977). Counselors help to develop the skills needed for problem solving and decision-making even as they give permission to be in a transition stage, which in turns lessens anxiety (Brooks, 1976). Through the careful planning and giving of advice and information, counselors can help to avoid major problems that may result from unrealistic expectations (Markus, 1976).

Counseling can reduce the psychological stress from role strain by predicting stressful situations and suggesting coping strategies. Further, some family tensions can be averted by sensitizing the re-entry student to the probable effects on the family of self-assertions. Such statements may make the family fear they have become less important to you (Roach, 1976).

Counseling helps in coping with guilt (Brandenburg, 1974). It can also alleviate the severe depression that Wiersma found common among women who had initiated mid-life change. For example those who returned to school, and failed to receive recognition found that it took "great strength because most of them had to do it in a vacuum" (Wiersma, 1977).

College counseling includes a wide spectrum of support services. In addition to those just mentioned it may spawn peer group counseling, drawing on women who have shared the experience of re-entry and know what it feels like. Those who are succeeding have overcome obstacles facing newer students and can be a great resource to them. Not only can experienced students provide "know-how," but they also offer social relationships and academic help, especially where remedial courses are unavailable or ineffective (Boston Conference, 1973).

Student groups can provide networks for disseminating information, and the sharing of feelings and behavior as well as providing opportunities for friendships. Merely knowing that others have similar concerns and are under the same kinds of stress is a relief and reinforcement and can lead to joint solutions. Through group discussion, role-playing and assertiveness training, women learn to manage their guilt, feelings of dependency and sex discrimination (Brandenburg, 1974; Brooks, 1976). Former re-entry women speaking on how to combine career and family -- or discussing resume and interview skills (Astin, 1976) -- focus in these talks on concerns of those with career goals, a majority of re-entry students. At the same time, along with female professors, these former re-entry women act as role models. Even women who are juniors and seniors serve as models and support for less advanced students (Catalyst; O'Connor, 1977).

Special programs are available at some institutions. Occasionally, they involve curricular based counseling especially designed for the re-enty woman and given for credit. A course was developed at a Virginia community college involving a supervised study on personal development. Women explored ideas concerning the traditional female role, in which a woman's esteem is dependent upon her husband's status. Anxiety results from attempts to grow beyond this relationship. Thus, high career aspirations lead to dissonance in career/familial roles. Another community college course was based on a "human potential seminar model." In it, students discussed campus-related and vocational planning (Tittle and Denker, 1977).

Women returning to school frequently do so to prepare for a job, or a better job (Astin, 1976). A study at an eastern college revealed that most re-entry students sought a career upon graduation (Brandenburg, 1974). Other studies found that among similarly educated women, those whose husbands

earn a high income are less likely to work than women whose husbands earn a low income (Astin, 1976). Some women desire to change fields or to update their career training (Moore, 1970). Brandenburg (1974) notes that "middle motherhood" is an important time for career exploration. Thus, it is not surprising that in one survey at a western university, career counseling was found to be among the greatest needs of re-entry women (Tittle and Denker, 1977). It is an advantage to achieve clear goals from the beginning as it enables students to avoid expensive and time-consuming false starts in their studies. Counseling gives the student direction and an awareness of how to ask for what she needs (Boston Conference, 1973).

Job placement also ranks among the foremost needs of re-entry women and is noted as a major institutional resource for these students (Byrne, 1970; Tittle and Denker, 1977; Wells and Magruder, 1972). One small school contacted local business and social service agencies seeking their direct involvement in placing the college's older students (Cunningham, 1973).

Academic counseling overlaps the area of career counseling as clear goals in the latter influence the former. Tittle and Denker (1977) report that thirty-four per cent of the respondents in one study cited the two as among the most urgent needs of returning women.

Academic counselors, like personal counselors, are better able to offer helpful advice when they have an understanding of the life situations and goals of the older students with whom they work. Thus, a former re-entry student was hired by the college she had attended to counsel its returning women (Cunningham, 1973). Continuous counseling by one individual fosters familiarity with students' needs and encourages the development of a supportive relationship in which the advisor becomes committed to the woman's remaining in school (Boston Conference, 1973).

IV. B. Situational Barriers and Supports

While factors such as lack of qualification for a particular school, insufficient funds or time, and heavy family responsibilities act to deter a woman from returning to school (Tittle and Denker, 1977), situational factors work against her success once she enters.

IV. B. 1. Unfamiliarity with the System

Re-entry women have no access to the information networks that younger students use to learn how the system works and how best to approach it. Instead of acquiring clues from high school counselors, and in college dormitories and dining rooms, they make discoveries on their own, often by trial and error (Boston Conference, 1973). For example, one woman discovered library books unavailable at other times, could often be checked out at 8 a.m. Another re-entry student preferred to buy the book, rather than compete with her entire class for an assigned library text. Still another woman found scheduling her classes in a block in order to spend afternoons studying at home meant that housework competed for her study time. She reports scheduling an hour between classes proved a better system, for she worked on campus without household distractions (Likert, 1967). Low-income students were reported at a disadvantage because they were unaware of how to locate used books, or how to initiate study sessions with other students before examinations (Boston Conference, 1973). The latter difficulty is true of re-entry students in general. Such a lack of information can best be overcome by talking, as one woman recommended, to "all kinds of people" on one's campus (Crichlow and Evans, 1973).

IV. B. 2. Financial Need/Financial Aid

Situational Barrier/Institutional and Individual Resources and Strategies

Financial need clearly is a problem for the low-income woman. There is less awareness of the fact that it is a growing problem for middle-class women as well. Two-thirds of Astin's (1976) sample -- women who were relatively well off -- responded that their children's education took financial priority over their own. Many women are not eligible for financial aid because of their husband's income even when they receive no financial help from it (Brandenburg, 1974; Watkins, 1974).

Regardless of income levels, re-entry women often find that stipulations for various scholarships, fellowships and federal assistance exclude part-time students (Brandenburg, 1974; Tittle and Denker, 1977) and are available only to students in the day school and not beyond the first year. Private grants average an inadequate $200 (Astin, 1976; Miller and White, 1973; Ekstrom, 1972; Markus, 1976, Tittle and Denker, 1977; Westervelt, 1975). Some schools with active CEW programs set aside funds for older, part-time women whether as grant in aid funds or scholarships (Cunningham, 1973; Markus, 1976).

Low-income women have financial problems that extend beyond tuition. Ekstrom (1972) reports that one program responded to their need for money, for books, carfare, meals away from home, and child care. More frequently, these women receive less than adequate aid. Often, it is because they are unfamiliar with procedures for obtaining it (Boston Conference, 1973, Ekstrom, 1972; Tittle and Denker, 1977). Inner city women are reported to find financial aid forms too complex; aid-counselors find their problems equally complex and send them elsewhere.

Good counseling, however, helps to locate financial aid for older students. The College Entrance Examination Board's Upper Division

Scholarship Competition awards scholarships to minority students who are graduates of community colleges. There are no age limits and they are renewable for the senior year. Counselors can explain about student loans, scholarships, some specifically for re-entry students, federal and state aid (Bequaert, 1973). Moore (1970) notes that the Danforth Foundation offers some graduate fellowships for women returning to graduate school in order to teach at the high school or college level.

Some schools offer opportunities for work/study. Middlesex Community College in Bedford has a "Volunteer for Credit" program in which an adult volunteers three hours of service weekly to receive ninety hours of classroom time amounting to two courses (Bequaert, 1973).

Foothill-De Anza Community College in California assigns students to paid internships in technical fields. They work twenty hours a week and take two courses per quarter (Tittle and Denker, 1977).

Our Lady of the Angels in Pennsylvania seeks jobs in the community for re-entry women both during and after their course work (Cunningham, 1973). Some schools waive tuition for school employees and graduate students with assistantships (Levine, 1976; Schuman, 1978).

Moore (1970) notes that a careful consideration of differences between schools can save the student money. Tuition varies, evaluation of past credit varies, requirements vary and the fewer the courses to be taken, the fewer the dollars spent.

School expenses may be deductible from state and federal taxes -- if you are seeking to return to a profession (Moore, 1970). If a woman qualifies, the government may pay part or all of the interest on a student loan (Farber, 1974).

IV. B. 3. Time Management and Role Strain

As involvement in school work takes time from one's families and friends (Roach, 1976), it becomes more difficult to adjust one's schedule to include domestic duties, children's activities, one's husband's interests and social contacts (Letchworth, 1970). Efforts to meet these multiple obligations can lead to considerable role strain. Astin (1976) reports that seventy percent of her respondents noted that conflicting demands on their time were a source of stress. While the traditional division of labor places the overall responsibility for organizing and supervising household and family affairs on "her" shoulders (Kolar and Hills, 1977) -- it allows, however, for the assignment of certain responsibilities to family members, hired help and community agencies (Angrist, 1976). Therefore, good management skills and an ability to delegate authority can offset some of the pressures (Van Meter, 1977).

Goode (1960) points out that society considers family relations to be the most obligatory. He is supported by Van Meter's (1977) findings showing that women students who had a low degree of role strain considered the family role to be the most important.

A study of CEW participants at the University of Michigan reported only seventeen percent of their husbands sharing chores equally after some of the women returned to school (Newsletter, 1973 -- winter). Even when spouses agree to such an arrangement, further efforts are sometimes needed for its success as when husbands and wives avoid their chores. One approach suggests reducing the importance of accomplishing the task thereby averting crisis, as for example by hiring temporary help or taking guests out to dinner (Roach, 1976). A less affluent student found that once she divided the work into kitchen and cleaning tasks which she and her husband were to

alternate weekly between them they stopped blaming each other for not having carried out their responsibilities and solved their problem. This same woman was fortunate in having her student husband take total care of their home and children during her first year of law school (Smith, 1977). Househusbands, however, appear to be a rare resource. More frequently, husbands help by chauffeuring children, attending their children's school programs and open houses and sharing shopping, vacuuming, and some meal preparations (Angrist, 1976; How on Earth Do Working Wives Manage?, 1971; Levine, 1976). Children themselves become more self-reliant, learning to keep their own appointments and asking other people for rides (Schuman, 1978). The re-entry women report that their children benefit from the increased independence (Astin, 1976).

In addition to delegating responsibilities, the re-entry student must organize, juggle and set priorities if she is to succeed. While the strategies are as varied as the women, a general move is toward reducing and eliminating some activities such as volunteer work or other community involvements (Moore, 1970). Social life is curtailed. Women entertain less, give up bridge, movies and seeing friends on the weekend (Farber, 1974; Likert, 1967). There is less time for non-academic reading (College on the Weekend, 1976). Some find it necessary to give up extracurricular campus activities (Smith, 1977).

Most re-entry women find they must spend less time with their families (Astin, 1976; Markus, 1976; Roach, 1976), which can mean sacrificing relationships with their children (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969). In an effort to offset diminished rapport, women attempt to combine "mothering" with other roles whenever possible. They visit with young children while they do housework or let them sit and draw in the room where they study. They make time for older children by sharing chores and conversation, for

example, in meal preparation. Grocery shopping becomes an outing when a different child is included weekly and the shopping trip ends in a soda. Older children accompany their mothers to the school library and are encouraged to develop an interest in the re-entry student's courses -- sometimes even reading their papers. Children are more often included in the couple's leisure activities such as theater and vacations (Gross, 1977; How on Earth Do Working Wives Manage?, 1971; Moore, 1970).

Re-entry students also combine domestic tasks, appointments and social obligations with academic demands in order to fulfill the many demands on their time. Thus, one woman reported, "I got a long extension cord to my telephone, and everybody knows now that if they want me, they can call around the time I'm getting dinner, because I can do that and talk at the same time." Other students taped class notes or chemical formulas and played them back as they cooked or sewed. Women kept pencil and paper by their ironing boards and kitchen sinks in order to write down ideas that occurred to them as they carried out their chores. One woman was able to get tapes through Audio-visual education for use at home, thereby avoiding language labs which kept her on campus. Another took advantage of overnight and Sunday check-outs of books kept on reserve in order to do her reading at home. In an effort to make every minute count, re-entry students took textbooks to doctor's offices and carried 3x5 cards with vocabulary or formulae in their purses and pulled them out for review while waiting in grocery lines (Likert, 1967). They discovered they could absorb material in fifteen to thirty minute intervals of "piecemeal study" fit into a busy schedule.

Women saved time where they could by xeroxing library materials rather than taking notes. They bought books to avoid special trips to the library -- and additional time spent in travel and in finding parking spaces (Likert, 1967). Yet, with all their efforts, many women still had to lengthen

the work day (Angrist, 1976; Moore, 1970). They rise early to do laundry, housework, and prepare the evening meal before leaving for school or to study when the house is quiet (How on Earth Do Working Women Manage, 1971; Smith, 1977). It means working on reserve energy (College on the Weekend, 1976) and the lowering of one's standards. Meals are quick and simple and late on the days when they have late classes; houses are messier (Brandenburg, 1974; Farber, 1974; How on Earth Do Working Wives Manage?. 1971; Markus, 1976).

Women streamline their housework by grocery shopping once a week, although for some several mini-trips seem faster than the weekly trip; use no-iron clothing, sheets and curtains; Christmas shop early to avoid conflicting demands with exams and papers. In general, these women carry out chores when there is time, not keeping to a traditional schedule (How on Earth Do Working Wives Manage?, 1971; Moore, 1970).

It takes careful and realistic planning to combine student and domestic roles. One must realize prior to registering that a three-hour course involves an additional two hours or more of preparation -- per hour -- plus transportation time. Therefore a single course means twelve hours a week, while a twelve to fifteen-hour course load is equivalent to a full-time job (Moore, 1970). It is clear that constant scheduling is important. McPharlin (1970) writes that "With discipline, I've found about three hours of studying daily, usually in the evening, is sufficient. And, I've been able to schedule classes in the morning, so my afternoons are free to spend my time with . . . [her child]." Another mother divided weekend days with her student husband. Each took one day to study and spent one day with the children (Smith, 1977). One attends school two days a week and reports that two of her days at home are devoted to car pools, shopping, and getting the house in shape -- or, as she says, "paying my dues" (Gross, 1977).

Time management presents a different face to the low income working woman -- whether or not she is a wife and/or mother. One mother took fifteen minutes from her lunch hour to rush from her job to her child's school in order to take her to the sitter (Miller and White, 1973). Another used her job's vacation time to finish school work (Boston Conference, 1973). A third fit her school work into lunch breaks and time spent on the subway (College on the Weekend, 1976).

IV. B. 4. Child Care

With even the best of organization, the student who is the mother of young children must delegate at least part of the child care. She may make arrangements for alternate care in or out of the home, relying on older family members, friends, hired help or child care centers.

Day care may be located in and affiliated with a college or university. It may be private or sponsored by neighborhood groups (Catalyst). A lack of college-sponsored or college-supported day-care facilities is a recognized barrier for these women (Astin, 1976; Brandenburg, 1974; Ekstrom, 1972; Kelman and Staley, 1974-75; Tittle and Denker, 1977), although using day care places a financial strain on the low-income student (Smith, 1977). On the other hand, institutions under financial strain provide day care as a way of attracting students (Cunningham, 1973), for it has been noted that good child-care centers draw women to a particular school (Emerson, 1977; McPharlin, 1976; Smith, 1977). In some cases licensed centers serve an additional purpose, acting as laboratories for child development in the psychology or education major (Cunningham, 1973; Boston Conference, 1973). One survey of re-entry women cited convenient child-care for pre-school children as a top priority (Tittle and Denker, 1977), As a result of this need, some re-entry groups have themselves established day-care centers serving an entire campus as well as providing lists of nearby

child-care resources (Brandenburg, 1974).

In lieu of institutional arrangements, some women are able to rely on their husbands. One such husband was able to babysit a few mornings a week by arranging to work occasional nights (McPharlin, 1976). Student husbands, however, could more easily make themselves available for sitting than other men. Therefore, a husband's occupation is an important factor in his ability to share in these tasks.

Grandparents, aunts and older siblings were mentioned as stand-ins for the mother. Occasionally two women take turns supervising the children while the other works or attends school (Brandenburg, 1976; Catalyst). One re-entry woman relied on her friends to babysit throughout the school year in return for sitting for their children all summer (Likert, 1967). Other students resort to day-long sitters (Watkins, 1974).

Early morning classes can create problems for the mother of young school aged children if she must leave before they are dressed, fed and on the school bus. One woman solved this difficulty by hiring a junior high school student to take over morning child-care duties (Likert, 1967).

It must be noted that babysitters outside the home mean transportation arrangements. They may involve dropping the child off on the way to school and picking him/her up afterwards or getting the child off to school and letting him/her go alone to the sitters when school is out (How on Earth Do Working Wives Manage?, 1971).

Angrist (1970) notes that the higher the socio-economic status (SES), the more likely the mother is to arrange in-home child-care in the form of a babysitter or domestic help. The working women classified as lower SES were more likely to take their child to a neighbor, friend or relative, less often paying for child-care and more often sharing these responsibilities with husbands.

IV. B. 5. Rusty Skills and Inadequate Preparation

The most obvious barrier to the re-entry woman's entrance and academic success lies in her "underpreparedness" as a result of rusty skills and inadequate preparation. The college experience demands that she be adept at taking notes, writing papers, and using the library (Brandenburg, 1974). Professors expect an active, rather than passive, approach to learning... a new experience for those who had earlier attended elite colleges as well as for the inner city woman (Astin, 1976).

The lack of review classes in special fields is a problem for re-entry students (Watkins, 1974). A working knowledge of mathematics and science is a prerequisite for many required -- or desired -- courses and the former is tested on entrance examinations as well. Over one-third of the women in Astin's (1976) survey reported inadequate preparation in these areas caused academic difficulties.

The older student who returns to the campus needs to know "how to analyze, define and compare things; to build and attack a generalization" and must learn the vocabulary of a course and its "basic assumptions and methodology" (Rosenmeier, 1973). This need applies equally to students of all ages in all life situations.

The resources for overcoming these barriers are almost totally in the hands of the institutions. Occasionally, women turn to their children if they are willing and able to offer help or, with enough money and awareness, the re-entry student can seek out tutors or special courses to bolster her academic ability, reading speed or typing skills (Levine, 1976).

A close look at institutional resources for remedial help or "skill building" shows that they fall mainly into three categories. They offer preparation in the form of special courses, solely for that purpose, attempt

to deal with the problems by interweaving the help with regular course work, or rely on student tutors. A caution issuing from one report warns against the use of student tutors, unless they are re-entry students. Young students too often correct errors rather than teach; older women, however, have shared the experience of re-entry and have valuable insights to offer (Boston Conference, 1973).

A six-week summer orientation program is an example of the first approach. It was intended to help special admissions students with their writing and required many papers and much reading. In another course, the instructor also provided the students with a significant writing experience while emphasizing development of self-confidence, self-awareness and ease of classroom expression. He felt these were essential for a "good start" (Boston Conference, 1973).

The University of Michigan offers a three-week course called "Reading Improvement" which also seeks to build one's power of concentration (Likert, 1967; Newletter, Fall, 1973).

Recognition that some women may have inadequate preparation for college work must go hand in hand with an awareness that there are those who feel they haven't time for remedial help because of jobs and family responsibilities. The teaching of basic skills within the context of the usual curriculum is suggested as one solution to this problem. One such class, a Women's Studies course, was jointly taught by a history and an English teacher. The emphasis was on writing as well as the subject matter -- the lives of 19th and 20th century American women. It was felt that the students would relate well to the topic and could then communicate their own experiences and reflections on the readings. They were taught to focus and expand on an idea, structure an argument and describe an experience.

An English course emphasized writing over grammar and taught the students

to cope with what one student termed their "biggest problem" -- organizing. They learned to analyze the readings and then to express ideas about them.

Yet another course introduced the students to the process of analysis -- time relationships, geographical relationships, that of particular to general, those of adding and subtracting equations, and the processes of comparison and of developing contrast. This course required close attention to the writing assignments and stimulation from good texts and lively discussion.

One teacher explains the importance of making sure that one's words are understood and emphasizes that one must teach the students how to express the concepts of the discipline in the appropriate language. He suggests that the instructor should stop the lesson and "restate or review or reflect" on the method, the language, and the logic and concludes that this sort of skill building is best accomplished by the professor, preferably in a classroom context (Rosenmeier, 1973).

IV. B. Support of Significant Others

IV. B. 6.a. Husbands

A lack of support from and/or negative attitudes of significant others pose a serious barrier for the re-entry woman (Ekstrom, 1972; Markus, 1967). A lack of support from one's husband prior to re-entry would seem to preclude a return to school (Astin, 1976; Tittle and Denker, 1977). Markus (1973) cites Brim, who noted that when an adult seeks change, the immediate social environment is crucial to the outcome of the change. Her own study showed that there is a positive relationship between perceived encouragement from children, parents, neighbors, friends, advisors and employers and successful re-entry: 68.2% of the women receiving low encouragment dropped out while only 31.8% of those who received high encouragement dropped out. The same relationship held for husbands as well, for the more help and encouragement the re-entry women received from their husbands, the greater the

likelihood they would stay in school. Kolar, (1977) however, found that women perceived a husband's encouragement as less important than their own motivation.

A majority of women studied reported supportive husbands. Markus (1973) found 82 percent perceived their husbands as offering some help and encouragment, with 58 percent reporting husbands who offered a great deal of help and encouragement.

Astin's (1976) survey revealed 62 percent with very supportive husbands and twenty percent with husbands who were somewhat supportive. One husband was reported as giving less support now that his wife was a student than when she worked (Levine, 1976).

Letchworth (1970) suggests that a husband's acceptance and encouragement enables the re-entry woman to make an easy adjustment to her new life. A dual career woman in Rapoport's (1969) study commented that behind every successful woman there is a man, meaning one who offers encouragement, advice and cooperation.

A lack of support appears also to be related to marital tension, which in turn acts as a barrier. Thirty percent of Astin's (1976) respondents who reported non-supportive husbands experienced marital tension and difficulties while in a continuing education program. Some low income, inner city women reported that their decision to go to school resulted in stresses developing within their families. Loss of income from the student's former jobs and lack of understanding on the part of the husbands for the significance of the new involvement contributed to these tensions (Boston Conference, 1973). Women are cautioned, however, against assuming a husband holds either a negative attitude of her new role or a more traditional view of women's roles in general than is actually the case (Astin, 1976; Roach, 1976).

Astin (1976) paid particular attention to the circumstances surrounding a husband's supportiveness. She concludes that three interpretations could be made of the male response that they are happy when their wives are happy. It could indicate 1) an empathetic concern for the wife's opportunity to develop herself; 2) anticipation of lessened financial burdens and greater security; 3) the belief that it is better to have a wife in school than to have an unhappy woman around the house. The men in her survey were particularly supportive when their wives were at the point when they could expect many years ahead with lessened domestic responsibilities, for example, the stage of the "empty nest," frequently shown to be accompanied by depression (Bart, 1970). Moore (1970) commenting on her husband's support, relates, "I suppose he . . . realized that broadening my interests would make me a more interesting person to him." Thus, support for a wife's return to school can indicate a selfish interest (Astin, 1976).

There were indications from some women in Astin's (1976) survey that their husbands were ambivalent about their wives' student status. Their activities were acceptable as long as they did not interfere with the husband's life nor disturb household routines. When school obligations conflicted with social life or leisure activities, supportive attitudes were withdrawn.

Changes in the women's attitudes about themselves prompted one man to say "I married one woman, and now I have another." Astin concludes he preferred the more traditional woman his wife once was.

IV. V. 6.b. Children

Children as well as husbands tended to be supportive of the women's student role and both groups tended to be satisfied with the arrangement. One study of re-entry women found, however, that four percent of the respondents noted resentment and distress on the part of their children (Astin, 1976) in some

cases leading to regressive behavior (Roach, 1976). Some young children failed to understand why their mothers had to go to school in the evening when they themselves did not (Gross, 1977). Feelings of competition caused women to conceal their good grades from children who were not doing as well in their own studies (Levine, 1976; Roach, 1976).

IV. B. 6.c. Friends

Re-entry can create distance between an individual and her earlier friendship group. Some friends resent her involvement in school work, while others resent her success outside the traditional female role . . . at least at her stage of the life cycle (Brandenburg, 1974; Markus, 1976; Watkins, 1974). This resentment can result in a loss of old friends and lead to what one counselor terms "sociological isolation" -- until the women acquire a new group of friends (Watkins, 1974).

A survey of a western university indicated that social contact with her peers was among the greatest needs of re-entry women (Tittle and Denker, 1977). Margolis (1974) concurs and points out that, "College is a lonely place for those who have no peers." One student commented, "My own adjustment to academic life . . . was helped immensely by the friendships I developed with women in my class" (McPharlin, 1976).

Understanding neighbors are a resource for the older student (Smith, 1977). This resource is especially valuable when family emergencies arise and student mothers cannot be contacted (Boston Conference, 1973).

IV. B. 7. Gaining and Maintaining Husband Support

Re-entry women and those who counsel them recognize the importance of having a husband's support. There appear to be several strategies for gaining and maintaining it. The first of these emphasizes that communication

between husband and wife is essential. Re-entry women mentioned that they brought their husbands into their long range educational planning and explained their student involvement and interests in an effort to work out tense relationships resulting from their return (Bailey, 1974; Levine, 1976). Professional counselors advocate intense discussion at the time the woman first considers returning to school to prevent future conflicts. Communication of why she wants to continue her education and what her plans and goals are, and what changes might occur in the home, helps her husband to understand and adjust to a new situation. Further, if he is not enthusiastic, it may bring about his acceptance of its importance to her. Discussion of these issues helps to allay a husband's fear that re-entry is preparation for separation or divorce and, therefore, is important to the stability of the marriage (Moore, 1970; Brooks, 1976; Catalyst).

Another strategy is to bring a husband into the student's world by seeking help with homework in areas where he has expertise. One re-entry student noted that it "pleased" him, implying that it was ego enhancing. Discussion of a book both have read allows another sort of sharing. Astin (1976) reports that some men take courses with their wives; Brandenburg (1974) suggests that a wife encourage her husband to return to school for the ultimate shared situation (Astin, 1976; Brandenburg; Moore, 1970). An annual open house was held by a small college in an effort to encourage husband's involvement in their wives' academic lives. It was felt that involvement would encourage support and facilitate successful re-entry (Cunningham, 1973).

Still another approach to sharing the re-entry world is to include the family in campus activities they can enjoy, e.g., films, plays, lectures and concerts. This integration serves the latent functions of 1) combining roles, as for example when an assignment becomes a family outing (Farber,

1974) and 2) placing the student role in a more favorable light by providing fringe benefits to the family, as for example, special student rates or free attendance at football and basketball games as well as the aforementioned events (Moore, 1970).

A final strategy involves compromise. A medical school student explained that she applied only to those schools within a 150-mile radius of her home because she chose not to be too far from her husband (Bailey, 1974). Wiersma (1977) reports that some women limit their career ambitions because they value their marital relationships and their husbands resist assignment to a lesser educational or career status.

In one survey, forty-five percent of the husbands believed they should be the sole bread winner while fifty-five percent believed they should share the role. Further analysis of the same sample found that women with similar educational background are less likely to work if their husbands earn a high rather than relatively low income (Astin, 1976).

IV. B. 8. Commuting

Because of the scarcity of time and money as resources, the re-entry woman must consider the distance involved in her journey to work (Boston Conference, 1973). Thus, she often selects her campus with an eye to her commute. Shuman (1978) comments that she picked her school because it was "a mere ten minutes" from her home. The greater the commuting distance, the greater the transportation costs, obstacles posed by inclement weather and limitations on library use (Astin, 1976; Miller and White, 1973; Byrne, 1970). Some schools are accessible only by car, presenting yet another barrier to the student without her own transportation or funds for high parking fees.

IV. B. 9. Health and Fatigue

Personal and family illnesses -- children, husband, parents -- present another problem for the returning student. She must cope with her own fatigue, physical and mental strain as well. Innovative women suggest taping lectures when one is too tired to concentrate (Schuman, 1978), and requesting records and tapes of required literary works from the Library of Congress to offset eye strain.

IV. B. 10. Status Inconsistency

A woman who has performed well at a job and/or as a housewife/mother may find the shift to the student role a disconcerting one. ". . .performance expectations may be realistic, inflexible or simply unanticipated" (Boston Conference, 1973). Student/faculty relationships most often require a deference the re-entry woman may be unaccustomed to granting her age peers, much less professors little older than her children. She must learn to accept broken appointments, lost papers, cancelled courses, professors who do not keep their office hours, and occasional mediocrity. It is also necessary to become adept at changing status and roles with ease as one steps on and off campus (Margolis, 1974; Byrne, 1970).

IV. B. 11. Legitimation

College attendance is deemed an expected and appropriate activity for the able, middle and upper-class young adult. Older women, however, must legitimate their academic aspirations to themselves and others. This difficulty is eased when the decision to return to school is motivated by financial need, when skills and credentials gained through further schooling are perceived as enabling one to seek a better job in the labor market (Haller and Rosemayr, 1971). In general, women are concerned that their schooling

be seen as a serious endeavor that is not an end in itself (Levine, 1976). Thus, re-entry students legitimate their academic undertaking with plans to pursue a career. For some women, career goals are clear from the outset; others hope that further education will give them direction (Markus, 1976; Cunningham, 1973). In some instances, the desire for a career emerges after college entrance (Tittle and Denker, 1977). CEW Scholarships (Markus, 1977) and tuition waivers awarded with graduate assistantships (Levine, 1976) are important legitimating factors. Brilliance, attested to by outstanding grades, justifies the student role as well (Smith, 1977). Finally, emphasis on school as a "wonderful experience" is suggested as an attempt to gain permission for a deviant role (Wiersma, 1977).

IV. B. 12. Life Cycle

Until recent years the female's life-cycle was equated with the family life-cycle. Today, women's activities no longer are limited by stages of the life-cycle, as can be seen by increasing labor market participation and college enrollment of older and/or married women, with and without children (Van Dusen and Sheldon, 1976). Lessened domestic responsibilities at a time when a woman can expect many productive years ahead can lead to a return to school (Astin, 1976; Byrne, 1970). An earlier study by Baruch reported that achievement motivation is associated with a college educated woman's age and family situation. Achievement needs are high before she bears her family, decline as she concentrates on raising them, and rise once more when children are grown. Markus (1973) interprets these findings as suggesting that re-entry women return to school in an effort to regain self-esteem and personal achievements set aside during their child rearing years. Just over 3/4 of the women surveyed by Astin (1976) responded that in addition

to marriage and motherhood a career was very important to them. The increase in women's interest in careers can be partially explained by the need for a second income when family expenses are highest, as, for example, when children reach adolescence (Van Dusen and Sheldon, 1976). Nevill and Damico (1977) propose that approaching middle-age is an impetus to the undertaking of new activities as one realizes that there is no longer unlimited time for new accomplishments.

IV. C. Dispositional Barriers

Attitudes and Personality

Thorough sex role socialization leads to an internalization of the stereotypic female role (Astin, 1976; Maracek and Kravitz, 1977; Tittle and Denker, 1977), in which married women are expected to be the "supporter(s), comforter(s), backstage manager(s), home maintainer(s) and main rearer(s) of children" (Papenek, 1972). Their families' interests are to be placed above their own (Letchworth, 1970) and mothers are to stay at home with their young children until they are of school age (Oppenheimer, 1970). Women are to receive their esteem through their husbands' status (Tittle and Denker, 1977) and are not expected to compete with them. It is as though there is an unspoken marital contract in which they are to support the husband in his endeavors, to do the housework, not to be too assertive (Wiersma, 1977). Therefore, women who accept this Victorian notion of womanhood feel guilty when there is dissonance between expectations and reality (Letchworth, 1970).

IV. C. 1. Guilt and Anxiety

Emerson (1977) noted that all of the re-entry women in her study reported having felt guilt at some time. The greatest guilt was associated with their children -- having to leave a sick child or taking time from

children to do homework. Many women, even if they were financially well off, felt guilty because they took family money to pay for their education. Douvan (1977) suggests that women must come to perceive that they have a legitimate claim on family money saved through their supportive services. Emerson (1977) notes that guilt was a factor encouraging women to work after they finished school in order to pay for their educational expenses. She also found that the more support a woman was given by her husband, the greater her guilt. Some women felt so guilty that they assumed responsibility for anything negative that happened. Hills (1970) found that 44 percent of the re-entry women she studied had feelings of guilt. While only 28 percent of the older single women had any guilt -- 65 percent of the older women with children admitted to such feelings.

In addition to the worry about neglecting one's children, some women are concerned that they are placing too much to "their" responsibility on husbands and children (Markus, 1977; Smith, 1977). Others respond by trying to do everything at once. Astin (1976) found that there were women in her survey who took on more of the domestic tasks than were necessary because they felt guilty about fulfilling themselves at the expense of their family. In response to their uncertainty, the husbands and children demanded even more. Unrealistic expectations led to even greater guilt and anxiety when women failed (Astin, 1976) to achieve their goals from a combination of exhaustion and frustration (Roach, 1976). One student, however, found she continued to listen for her children even though her husband had agreed to assume total child care duties during her first year of school. Because she had internalized "her" responsibility, she was forced to study away from home (Smith, 1977).

Another source of guilt stems from a situational factor -- pressure from family and friends to stay at home (Astin, 1976). Suggestions that

husbands and children are being neglected (Brandenburg, 1974), (a challenge that working women must parry as well), result when multiple role obligations cause deviations from expected norms of kin behavior (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969). Deviation from traditionally female areas of study bring added pressures. "From the time I decided to be a lawyer . . . people have told me not to. . . 'You'll turn into a hard woman', one friend said" (Smith, 1977). Another woman found she had to overcome traditional societal norms militating against moving the family to another city in order for her to accept a place in law school. She noted that her husband could continue to work on his research wherever there was a good library (McPharlin, 1976). Thus, even when women perceive that they can successfully combine family and school responsibilities, there are social pressures for conformity.

Guilt can produce feelings of anxiety and ultimately lead to strain, which Robison (1978) defines as the perceived sense of pressure and demand on personal time. From a study of data on employed women and housewives, she concludes that strain need not be <u>all</u> bad. She suggests that for employed women in particular, just knowing that they can handle the multiple demands --and that <u>they are in demand</u> -- can compensate for the strain that the demands themselves generate. She notes that their greater activity and participation as well as possible social recognition resulting from the strain producing roles, can be viewed as rewarding. Emerson (1977) lends support to this theory as she found re-entry student's feelings of guilt tended to decline as time went on and the woman succeeded in school. Thus, there appears to be a negative relationship between guilt and self-esteem. Levine (1976) reports that women gain a sense of independence, of competence and of self-confidence based on their changed feelings about themselves. Failure to receive recognition for meeting multiple demands can lead to resentment especially if a husband is praised for his contri-

butions to household management (Smith, 1977).

Anderson (1974) suggests that as a woman's education increases, traditional female roles are perceived as constricting. In one study of a small, midwestern school, prior to re-entry, twenty percent were active feminists. After they had completed their studies, 75.5 percent considered themselves active feminists (Watkins, 1974).

Yet, attempts at change can require a long and difficult struggle. Even those that occur spontaneously can be disrupting, disturbing and anxiety producing (Roach, 1976; Tittle and Denker, 1977). School provides re-entry women with an interest that is their own and one that is not dependent on the family (Levine, 1976). Through it they gain an internal source of self-esteem (Brooks, 1976) as academic accomplishments lead to the perception that they are worth-while individuals (Roach, 1976). Margolis (1974) notes that, "Each grade is treated as the ultimate measure of one's worth." And a record of accomplishments in turn makes these women less subservient (Ashbell, 1974) and brings about the rejection of the wife/mother/homemaker role as the sole role (Roach, 1976). Whatever the cost of the struggle, nearly all of the married women in Astin's (1970) sample reported greater happiness in their personal lives, in addition to increased self-awareness and self-esteem.

One's changing self-image can lead to changed relationships as well, which may in turn produce family tensions (Roach, 1976; Rhonda in Boston, 1973). The student's new self-confidence, self-esteem and independence can be viewed negatively by her husband and children, who may react by withholding the acceptance and supportive behavior she expects. Their failure to meet her needs causes her to turn to the campus world for recognition and encouragement. The positive atmosphere she finds there in contrast to the environment at home is suggested as a major factor in a large number of separations and divorces occurring among re-entry women (Roach, 1976).

In addition to those problems just discussed, anxiety issues from academic concerns as well. There is an almost universal lack of self-confidence in an ability to perform as a student. The re-entry woman may equate age with knowledge, expecting "A" averages and instant comprehension of material. Failure to achieve these goals can lead to a sense of shame and fear of examinations -- especially as most returning women are successful. She may come to perceive herself as lacking ability and fear classroom interaction (Letchworth, 1970). Astin found that three fifths of her respondents felt anxiety over exams and half felt it when writing papers or when faced with lengthy homework assignments. They mentioned that inadequate math and science preparation also produced anxiety. Speaking before a class was a matter of concern, although it was easier for women under forty. Reading concentration, comprehension, and recall worried women over thirty, especially those who were forty-one to fifty. These fears can create problems as well as be their consequence, interfering with the student's ability to read critically and analyze information (Brandenburg, 1974).

Even successful students recall the agony of writing their first papers (Likert, 1967) and taking examinations. One woman commented that she was afraid because she wanted to do well and saw her present student status as a second chance. She felt she had to succeed to prove to herself that she could and because she saw her whole future at stake (Brandenburg, 1974). Faculty interest (Gross, 1977), and a growing sense of accomplishment (Markus, 1976) are seen as eventually offsetting this anxiety. Beginning slowly, with only one or two courses, is also a help as it allows the student to spend more time on her studies (Gross, 1977; Catalyst).

Inner city women have yet another reason for anxiety. Not only do they lack self-confidence in their ability -- so do their teachers. Their high school records say these students are not college material and their

early re-entry performance frequently underscores this impression (Crichlow and Evans, 1973).

A final concern that is unrelated to academics -- but that is campus related -- is the fear of social isolation. Such fears are greatest where there are few returning women. When these women do discover one another, it is often the case that they must rush from the campus to homes miles apart. On campuses with larger numbers of re-entry women, organized student groups (see counseling section) provide opportunities for friendships with other returning students, thus alleviating feelings of isolation. Mature students are concerned that they will be unable to relate to young students and that they will feel like outsiders. Reports suggest, however, that most women find young classmates "warm and friendly," gladly sharing notes and conversation about course work and exams. Contact, nonetheless, is usually confined to the classroom. Awareness of a tendency to dominate classroom discussion causes concern in some women. They fear it is an unconscious effort to build rapport with older professors who share a common historical past -- and that it will alienate them from younger students. Resentment is felt to exist, as well, toward the woman taking one or two courses because she is perceived as having an unfair advantage (Astin, 1976; Farber, 1974; Letchworth, 1970; Margolis, 1974; Markus, 1976; Moore, 1970).

Inner city women face differences that go beyond age. They come from different backgrounds which do not prepare them to understand expected behavior, measurements of success or relationships encountered (Boston Conference, 1973).

One further study that has relevance for the dispositional barriers under discussion was made by Booth (1977). He measured the difference in discord among working women who had just entered the labor force and

and those who had worked for more than a year. His findings suggest that while there is a stressful period of adjustment for wives -- and probably for husbands -- when the woman first joins the labor force, it is short-lived. There was little difference between wives who had worked full time for more than a year and housewives who had never worked. He concludes that it is the transition between roles that results in stress. The need for adjusting the division of labor within the family and of modifying schedules and routines may well be at fault. Thus, re-entry students may experience relief from stress caused by these same adjustments merely with the passage of time.

## SUMMARY

The overall review suggests that women are now seeking something for themselves beyond the traditional role of wife/mother/homemaker. Whether they are forced out of the home by economic need, marital disruption or growing discontent with the limitations imposed by total immersion in the home, women have internalized societal expectations for autonomy and independence. But these expectations run counter to the traditional role of women who make sacrifices for family interests. And so more and more women experience anxiety over conflict of interest when they try to achieve outside the home. Despite these strains, women find it worthwhile to pursue their own interests and make a place for themselves based on their own abilities outside the home. In this pursuit they have been ingenious and resourceful, developing strategies to manage their homes, delegate responsibilities, develop new family relationships that permit and even encourage an independent existence.

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